

MINUTES

COMMITTEE OF PRACTITIONERS

FEBRAURY 3, 2010 – NASHVILLE

1st Floor Conference Room

Following the welcome, Dr. Julie McCargar, Executive Director of Federal Programs, reviewed the purpose of the meeting, gave a brief overview of the agenda, and had members introduce themselves to the group after a brief introductory activity.

Purpose of the Meeting: Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, it is required that stakeholders – Committee of Practitioners – be assembled to provide input on Title I issues, state initiatives, and state policies. Agenda overview:

- New directions in Federal Education
 - Race to the Top Application
- State Mandated Operating Procedures
- Accountability Changes
- Graduation Rates and accountability
 - Waivers and Amendments
- School Improvement
 - Persistently lowest achieving schools
 - Intervention
 - SIG Application
- Teacher Equity Plan

Dr. McCargar presented an overview of the Race to the Top application.

Race to the Top is an opportunity for the State of Tennessee to compete for \$501 million academic grant dollars. These funds are made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (AARA).

Sometime in April, the winning states will be awarded monies to improve education in four areas:

- Building and expanding the system of student assessment already in place
- Recruiting, keeping and rewarding productive teachers and principals
- Providing effective intervention and intensive support for the lowest performing schools
- Preparing students for college and the work force

Tennessee plans to reach very ambitious and achievable goals by capitalizing on Tennessee's assets:

- A rich pool of data
- A plan in place for revamped standards and assessments
- Growing STEM industries
- A wide variety of local and national organizations willing to help
- An expanded charter school law that can bring in new innovation

The focus for Tennessee will be on the power of human capital:

Recruiting, developing, evaluating, and compensating the best talent Tennessee can find for its schools; equipping them with the tools they need to succeed, such as standards and data; defining expectations and setting the bar high for student, teacher and principal success; rethinking old and out-of-date practices that keep great teachers and leaders from succeeding; and harnessing the power of external organizations, foundations, and committed partners to help Tennessee achieve its specific goals and targets.

The Executive Summary for Tennessee (distributed to all membership): First to the Top – highlighted the application in sections:

- State Success Factors
- Standards and Assessments
- Data Systems to Support Instruction
- Great Teachers and Leaders
- Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools
- Budget Summary
 - Human Capital
 - Professional Development
 - Interventions
 - Implementation
 - Research

Dr. Debra Owens, Associate Executive Director, for Federal Programs then talked about changes in the Mandated Operating Procedures for the Administration of No Child Left Behind Consolidated Application Funds.

Changes were reflected in red. Committee members were asked to review the changes and if they had any questions or comments to e-mail or call Debra Owens.

Dr. Owens then introduced Janine Whited from the Accountability section of the department to talk about evidence the state must submit related to its graduation rate.

- (1) Graduation rate change beginning with School Year 2009-2010.
 - (2) New NGS Graduation Rate Report available to school systems in February.
 - (3) Different from graduation rate used for school years 2002-03 through 2008-09.
- The **old rate** estimates the graduation cohort by taking all students who graduated in a specific year and adding cohort dropouts to populate the formula:
$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{On time regular graduates}}{\text{All Graduates} + \text{Cohort Dropouts}}$$

The **new rate** (NGA) calculates the graduation cohort by assigning each 9th grade student to a cohort based primarily on the year entered ninth grade and then following the student through his/her high school career.

Graduation Rate = $\frac{\text{Members of the Cohort receiving a regular diploma}}{\text{Members of the Cohort}}$

The new rate is generated on 4 years' of data in the Data Warehouse (State Longitudinal Data System). In 2009-10 three categories of students are given an additional year – Special Education, ELL, and students in Middle Colleges. If students in these three categories entered 9th grade in 2005-06, they will be included in the 2009-10 cohort and even though a regular diploma was earned in 5 years the students would count in both the numerator and denominator.

2010-11 4 Year Grad Rate – starting in 2010-11, for all students, the 4-year cohort is defined as 3 years after the students first entered 9th grade. (i.e. 2007-08 for the 2010-11 cohort). Due to more limited use of withdrawal code W7, students withdrawn with this code will only be students with no ability to return to school and, thus, they will be removed from the cohort beginning with the 2010-11 calculation of the 4-year adjusted cohort rate.

Extended Graduation Rate – to allow credit for late graduates, Tennessee proposes to calculate 2 extended-year rates; 5 year and 6 year for use with the 4-year graduation rate to determine AYP. More details will be provided following approval from the USDOE.

A summary chart of the proposed amendments to Tennessee's Accountability Workbook was distributed for all to review.

- Revise proficiency starting points
- Reestablish statewide AMOs
- Extend meeting AYP goals to 2016-17
- Make AYP by December 2010
- Public School Choice Notification
- Modified Achievement Standards Assessment
- Interim Graduation Rate
- New cohort based graduation rate calculations

LUNCH BREAK

Dr. Debra Owens opened discussion regarding school improvement. Dr. Owens talked about the guiding principles as being:

- (1) Students who attend a State's persistently lowest-achieving schools deserve better options and can't afford to wait.
- (2) Not quantity, but quality
- (3) Need to build capacity and supports at all levels
- (4) Not a one-year activity

- Persistently lowest achieving schools

Identification of the Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools – Tennessee aligned its state accountability model to the NCLB accountability model. Through the grant requirements in the Race to the Top, State Fiscal Stabilization Funds and Title I School Improvement Grants, the Obama

administration has changed the definition and approach to the nation's most struggling schools. The grants are being funded primarily with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.

Under the NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) model, some schools that are consistently struggling were not identified to receive the most rigorous interventions because NCLB AYP contained safe harbor and other provisions which allow schools to show improvement but still have very low achievement. President Obama and Secretary Duncan want to address this inconsistency in the current NCLB accountability model. To do this, they have defined the most struggling schools as "persistently lowest-achieving" in the current Race to the Top and other ARRA grant programs. In 2010, President Obama and Secretary Duncan will probably refocus efforts on the "persistently lowest-achieving" schools by including this new definition in the proposals for the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Two "tiers" of low achieving schools compose the persistently lowest-achieving schools:

Tier 1 – Title I high priority school (a Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring as defined in ESEA) that is either in the lowest five percent of all Title I high priority schools in the ALL subgroup for math and reading/language arts combined achievement or is a Title I secondary school (defined as a high school in TN) with a graduation rate of less than 60% (for two out of the last three years).

Tier 2 – Any Title I secondary school eligible but not "served" by Title I that is in the lowest five percent of these schools in the ALL subgroup for math and reading/language arts combined achievement or has a graduation rate of less than 60% (for two out of the last three years).

Tier 1 and Tier 2 are considered under the Obama definition to be the State's "persistently lowest-achieving" schools and should be prioritized for rigorous interventions and resources.

The policy on the identification of persistently lowest-achieve schools was also distributed (see attached) for review. Committee members were asked to read the SBE policy and answer the questions: What do Tier 1 and Tier 3 schools have in common? ; And, what are the unique aspects of Tier 2 schools? Discussion followed. Other questions were asked for the committee to respond to: What is AYP? How can a school become high priority? What is a key difference between identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools versus identifying the improvement status or high priority status? Discussion followed.

Two changes were made in 2010 with the Consolidated Appropriations Act to the new December 09 SIG program:

- (1) Expanded the schools eligible to receive SIG funds.
- (2) Raised the maximum amount that a participating school may receive from \$500,000 to \$2,000,000.

States applying for ARRA funds had to specifically define the criteria used to identify the state's "persistently lowest-achieving schools" because the new categorization of persistently lowest-achieving does not always conform to the old AYP statuses of school improvement 1 and 2, corrective action and restructuring in Tennessee/NCLB accountability statutes.

Tier III Schools are being added in Tennessee:

A Title I high school that: (1) participated in High School Redesign SIG funding based upon failing AYP for 2 prior years prior to 2008-09, and (2) does not meet the requirements to be a Tier I or Tier II school.

An LEA is eligible to apply for SIG funds if it (1) receives Title I, Part A funds, and (2) has one or more schools that are eligible to receive SIG funds as identified by the SEA.

Tennessee is addressing struggling schools by :

- using SFSF phase 2, RTTT, and SIG funds for common solutions , and
- working two systems of accountability at the same time: NCLB accountability model (state) and new SFSF, RTTT, SIG accountability model (federal).
- Tennessee's pyramid of intervention was discussed – Excellence, Focus Schools, Renewal Schools, Achievement School District.
- SIG legislation dictates that Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools are mandated to choose one of four intervention models and states have no authority to waive these provisions of the regulations.
- Four SIG school intervention models include: Turnaround, Restart, Closure and Transformation. An overview of each was given and discussed.
- The state department's role is to:
 - (1) identify Tier I, II and III schools
 - (2) establish criteria related to the overall quality of an LEA's application and to an LEA's capacity to implement fully and effectively the required interventions
 - (3) monitor the LEA's implementation of interventions and the progress of its participating schools
 - (4) hold each Tier I, II and III school accountable annually for meeting or being on track to meet the LEA's student achievement goals.
- The LEA's role is to:
- (1) serve each of its Tier I schools, unless the LEA demonstrates that it lacks sufficient capacity or sufficient funds.
- (2) Implement one of the four models in each Tier I and Tier II school the LEA has the capacity to serve.
- (3) Provide adequate resources to each Tier I and Tier II school it commits to serve in order to implement fully one of the four school intervention models
- (4) Establish three-year student achievement goals in reading/language arts and mathematics and hold each Tier I, II and III school accountable annually for meeting or being on track to meet those goals.
- SIG Application – a copy of the School Improvement Application submitted to the USDOE was included in the Committee packets for review. The Committee was asked to review the application and provide comments.

Merrie Clark, Data and Research Manager, in the Office of Federal Programs, talked about the Teacher Equity Plan.

Purpose of the plan: to ensure that poor or minority students are taught by effective teachers at the same or higher rates as other students. Designed in 2006.

Background: In 2006, US DOE required states to submit highly qualified teacher state plans that included an equity plan to ensure “that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-the field teachers”.

Tennessee’s plan contained a comprehensive analysis of the equitable distribution of HQTs across the state as well as an analysis of teacher experience and education levels by school poverty and minority status. The analyses found that high poverty and high minority schools had a larger percentage of beginning teachers, a smaller percentage of teachers with master’s degrees, and a lower percentage of core academic courses taught by HQTs than low poverty and low minority schools.

2006 Plan identified six districts with the greatest equity gaps, detailed strategies to address these gaps, and outlined steps that the state would take to monitor implementation of teacher equity plans in these districts. The six districts will share the results of their teacher equity implementation plans with other districts so that successful strategies can be replicated across the state.

The TN Department of Education partnered with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), which drew on the resources and expertise of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ), to provide technical assistance to the six districts with the greatest equity gaps.

Tennessee committed to take its study further by examining the disparity in teacher effectiveness, as measured by student progress on statewide achievement assessments. The state concluded (based on research conducted in 2007) that a clear equity problem existed. Students in high poverty, high-minority schools had less access to the state’s most effective teachers and more access to the state’s least effective teachers than students in low poverty, low minority schools.

In 2007 legislative session, the Tennessee Code was amended to include Sections 5 and 6, which address HQTs in hard-to-staff schools and subjects. Under the statute, each district is required to develop a differentiated pay plan that addresses teaching in hard-to-staff subject areas or in schools that have difficulty hiring and retaining HQTs. The statute grants the TN Department of Education authority to approve the district plan.

- Research studies found that teachers influence student learning more than any other factor. The effect of teachers on student achievement is cumulative; having just a few ineffective teachers can have detrimental long-term consequences for the students affected.
- Having effective teachers positively impacts student achievement.
- Tennessee is committed to identifying and providing highly effective teachers in all classrooms.
- The updated 2009-2010 plan compares data on highly qualified teachers, teachers’ years of experience, and teacher effectiveness in high poverty and low poverty public schools across the state.

Summary of the findings:

- (1) The percentage of highly qualified teachers has increased significantly since the 2006 plan with the gap in the percentage of HQTs between high poverty and low poverty schools eliminated (elementary level) or nearly eliminated (secondary level)
- (2) High poverty schools, high minority schools, and high poverty/high minority schools have a larger percentage of inexperienced teachers (five years of experience or less) than low poverty, low minority, and low poverty/low minority schools
- (3) High poverty schools have a larger percentage of ineffective teachers and a smaller percentage of highly effective teachers than low poverty schools when comparing combined math, science and reading/language arts teacher effect scores.

When looking at the separate teacher effect scores, for reading/language arts, high poverty schools have more ineffective teachers and fewer highly effective teachers than low poverty schools.

For math and science, the percentages of ineffective teachers in high poverty and low poverty schools are similar but large, indicating a need to improve the quality of math and science teachers across Tennessee.

For science, high poverty schools have a much smaller percentage of highly effective teachers than low poverty schools, suggesting that students in high poverty schools may not have access to the most effective science teacher.

The 2009-2010 Teacher Equity Plan provides background on the teacher equity issue in Tennessee to include:

- (1) challenges, strategies and progress
- (2) examines inequities in teacher assignment through analyses and discussion of the distribution of highly qualified teachers, teachers' years of experience and teacher effectiveness across high poverty and low poverty schools.
- (3) presents strategies that will be implemented to ensure the equitable distribution of highly qualified, highly effective teachers in schools.

Teacher Equity discussion ensued.

Following this presentation, Dr. McCargar, talked about travel reimbursements, meeting evaluations and the meeting was adjourned.